

Million-Dollar Drive Aims to Oust 5 Liberal Senators: A ...

By BERNARD WEINRAUB Special to The New York Times

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WASHINGTON, March 22 — A basketball player dribbling a ball appeared on television screens across South Dakota the other morning.

"Globetrotter is a great name for a basketball team, but it's a terrible name for a Senator," said the announcer. "While the energy crisis was brewing, George McGovern was touring Cuba with Fidel Castro. He also took a one-month junket to Africa. All at taxpayers' expense."

The announcer concluded: "No wonder he lost touch with South Dakota. With so many problems at home, we need a Senator and not a globetrotter."

In Indiana, a large baloney recently appeared on television screens. Abruptly, a cleaver sliced the baloney and a voice said: "One very big piece of baloney is Birch Bayh telling us he's fighting inflation."

A Million-Dollar Campaign

A price appeared on the sliced baloney: \$46 billion. "That's how much deficit spending Bayh voted for last year alone," the voice said, pausing before concluding: "So, to stop inflation, you'll have to stop Bayh first. Because if Bayh wins, you lose."

The unusually acid commercials are part of a million-dollar advertising campaign in which conservative groups are seeking to unseat five liberal Senators by presenting a "negative image" of them

on television, radio and in newspapers.

The smoothly organized drive, spearheaded by the National Conservative Political Action Committee, depicts Frank Church of Idaho, John C. Culver of Iowa, Alan Cranston of California and Senators McGovern and Bayh as "radicals" for their stands on abortion, gun control, the proposed equal rights amendment and the economy.

"There's no question about it — we are a negative organization that wants to get rid of five bad votes in the Senate," said John T. Dolan, director of the umbrella group. "We're interested in ideology. We're not interested in respectability. We're going to beat these five and send a shiver down the spine of every other liberal Senator and Congressman."

What makes the negative campaign unusual is that it seeks the defeat of the five incumbents without openly promoting any challengers.

Using a New Approach

Past efforts of conservatives were aimed at seeking control over the Republican Party, but the new method appears to be aimed at creating coalitions among special interest groups, such as the gun lobby, anti-abortionists and those opposed to a strategic arms limitation agreement with the Soviet Union.

"This is an entirely new development in the political process," said Cleve Corlett, press secretary to Mr. Church. "It's very scary and dangerous. We're seeing the New Right melding single-issue groups into one monolithic force and using tactics that are divisive and based on fear."

Mr. Corlett said that Idaho voters had been subjected to "an unrelenting drumbeat" of television commercials and letters in the last 14 months directed against Mr. Church, who is chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. One of those radio spots was broadcast 150 times a day throughout Idaho for five days.

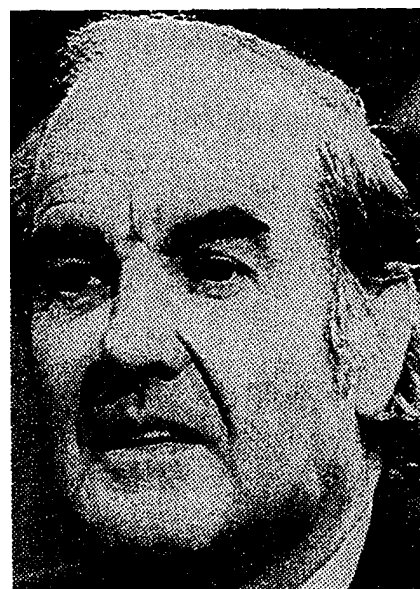
"We really haven't seen these kinds of tactics and this negative approach to this degree in a long time," said Tom Baker, executive director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. "We take them very seriously. We have to. They're well-financed and they're making their money felt."

More than \$380,000, for example, has been budgeted against Mr. McGovern, a key target of the campaign, according to the Senator's aides. Mr. Dolan contends that the figure is closer to \$100,000, but makes it clear that the Senator is a prime target for conservatives.

Attack on McGovern

Mr. McGovern is depicted in fund-raising leaflets in South Dakota as a "radical left extremist" who has voted for handgun control, spoken in behalf of the homosexual rights movement, praised Cuba and "been an enemy of the F.B.I. and C.I.A. since he came to the Senate."

One newspaper advertisement says:



United Press International

Senator George S. McGovern

"George McGovern voted against you when he voted to bail out New York City and its labor unions, bureaucrats and crooked politicians and cost South Dakota more inflation."

Even greater controversy has been stirred by an anti-abortion group, "Stop The Baby Killers," which has sent out letters to South Dakota and other states saying that Mr. McGovern and his liberal colleagues were "political baby killers" who "apparently think it's perfectly O.K. to slaughter unborn infants by abortion."

"These groups are very dedicated, very active and, I think, very dangerous," said George Cunningham, administrative assistant to Mr. McGovern. "They're using issue as a facade, as a flag out front, to try to defeat liberals and moderates."

Mr. Dolan, who has close ties with Richard A. Viguerie, who raises funds for conservative causes through direct mail campaigns, concedes that his efforts to unseat the five liberals are rooted in a loophole created by the United States Supreme Court when it ruled in 1976 that independent groups could spend unlimited amounts on political causes, as long as they did not coordinate their efforts with any candidate. Direct contributions to candidates from political action committees are limited to \$5,000 in a primary campaign, and \$5,000 in the general election.

Mr. Dolan said in an interview that his group raised more than \$2.2 million last year, largely through direct mail, and expected to raise \$2 million this year. The group expects to spend about \$1.3 million in the political campaign. The rest of the money would be spent on such activities

as polling, research, lobbying and obtaining professional consultants to help in precinct organization, scheduling and campaign management.

Although Mr. Dolan's organization is the dominant group waging the campaign against the five Senators, other rightist groups are acting independently to accomplish the same goals. Mr. Church, for example, is also the target of the Committee for a Positive Change, Stop the Baby Killers, the National Right to Life Committee and the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms.

What has sharpened the anger of the liberal Senators and their supporters is the tough, blunt — and the liberals say, unfair — media and mail campaigns that began last summer.

One Idaho commercial was taped in front of an empty silo for intercontinental ballistic missiles, implying that Mr. Church was responsible for the void and "has almost always opposed a strong national defense." In fact, the Titan silo was empty because the weapons have been replaced by more advanced Minuteman missiles.

Mr. Dolan insisted that the group's advertisements were carefully researched and accurate, except for one dealing with Senator Church's vote on a pay raise. The group apologized for the error.

"Images are important, not issues," Mr. Dolan said. "We start early and use repetition and it's bound to have an impact. Start with an image like George McGovern doesn't represent South Dakota. Keep hitting away. That's more effective than George McGovern did or didn't do X, Y or Z for South Dakota."